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ABSTRACT

Methodological issues which confront researchers using the concept of the family career include the selection of appropriate dependent variables; the efficacy of historical versus immediate effects; and scaling the family career (a proposed replacement for the "family life cycle"). The issue of which dependent variables should be explained by the family career rather than by the present stage of the career was found to be unresolvable, partially due to the paucity of empirical research on the family career in relation to these variables. In addition, a more substantial problem underlies the selection of dependent variables: the issue of immediate and historical effects. Many researchers appear to assume effects to be the result of the immediately previous stimuli. However, these effects might result from historical effects or an interaction of both historical and immediate causes. The third issue is scaling the sequencing of the family career stages, since the timing dimesion is already at an adequate level of measurement. Sequencing is treated as a normatively regulated process such that deviations from the modal procession of stages implies deviations from the norms. The family career scale developed is a measure of deviations from the normative family career. (CM)

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Some Methodological Considerations in Researching the Family Career*

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Most of the research in the developmental framework has focused on describing families by their present stage in the life cycle (Duvall, 1977; Hill, 1970; Glick, 1977; Schram, 1979; and Spanier, Sawer and Larzelere, 1979; to mention a few). Although this approach has enjoyed great favor among family researchers, it has also come under critical scrutiny. For example, Nock (1979) asserts that the present stage of the life cycle is so confounded with other variables such as age and marital status that it must be considered 'multidimensional'. Spainer, Sauer and Larzelere (1979) found that at times age cohort or marital status might offer a more explanatory conceptualization than stage of the family life cycle. Feldman and Feldman (1975) are directly critical of the fact that present stage of the life cycle reveals little of the historical and temporal dimension of families over time. The result of these critiques has been the emergence of an alternative developmental concept, the family career (Rodgers, 1973; Feldman and Feldman, 1975; Aldous, 1978). Although this concept is not new to developmental theory it remains relatively unresearched in comparison to the present stage of the family life cycle.

The concept of the family career is not really new to the developmental framework since it is largely intended as a replacement for the term 'family life cycle'. In fact, Rodgers (1964, 1973) and Feldman and Feldman (1975) have pointed out that the term 'cycle' is not appropriate for a family since the same individuals do not repeat the same sequence of events. But, on the other hand, the use of the term 'family career' has brought with it connotations from the study of occupations and professions that the term 'family life cycle' never carried. Both Rodgers (1973) and Aldous (1978) have elaborated the family career as a procession of roles over time.

The idea of 'stages' in the family career or life cycle is still the most popular approach to researching family development. According to Aldous (1978)

> A stage is a division within the lifetime of a family that is distinctive enough from those that precede and follow it to constitute a separate period. It presupposes qualitative changes so readily discernible that earlier interaction patterns cluster together in clear distinction from later phenomena. Unless this sort of segregation occurs in portions of a developmental process, it makes little sense to use the concept of stage (Flavell; 1962)
>
> (Aldous, 1978: 80)

Although many researchers return to the stages first proposed by Duvall and Hill, Rodgers (1973) suggests that the delineation of 'stages' depends on the interests of the researcher. "These classifications are not real but imposed on the family career by the researcher in order to make comparisons which he considers important. Thus, different categories may be developed for different problems; that is, the family career may be broken up in various ways for various purposes". (1973: 78). Thus for both Rodgers and Aldous, the 'stages' represent cross-sections of the family career. If any real disagreement exists between Aldous and Rodgers' versions of the family career stages it would be in the area of the degree to which the 'stages' can be or should be designated by the interests of the researcher.

The purpose of the present paper is to discuss three issues which confront researchers using the concept of the family career. These three methodological issues are:

1. The selection of appropriate dependent variables,
2. The efficacy of historical vs. immediate effects, and
3. The problem of scaling the family career.

These three issues are intimately related both with each other and, as well, with a number of other issues which will only be mentioned en passant. This paper, then, does not intend to be an exhaustive exploration of developmental methodology[1] nor even to exhaust the three issues to be considered. Rather the purpose of this paper is for the author to share his vexations and partial solutions with

[1] See Baltes, Reese, and Nesselroade's Life-Span Developmental Psychology: Introduction to Research Methods.

other concerned researchers.

Selection of Appropriate Dependent Variables

Much of the extant literature dealing with family careers or life cycle stages is descriptive in nature. For this descriptive task the categories of independent and dependent variable are irrelevant. The major areas which have been targeted as dependent variable sets are consumption patterns of the household and marital satisfaction.

In regard to comsumption patterns, it is argues by developmental theorists that developmental theory predicts changes in roles and role behavior over the family career and that the consumer role is developmental in nature. However, when one examines the research literature the family career is most often treated as a compilation of demographic characteristics such as the age of the head of the household and the ages of children living at home (Lansing and Kish, 1957). With this approach, as Rodgers (1973) suggests, "...it becomes apparent that the basic concern is not so much with what may be the role characteristics of these household units as with a method of refining the easily identifiable demographic characteristics which may lead to more efficient explanation of consumer behavior in the statistical sense". (1973:167) Hence, one could say that developental theory is not really being used but that the idea of the family career has been seminal in the creation of an index created from multiple demographic characteristics. In the area of consumer patterns, we must conclude that the theory is not well developed so that it could specify the relationship between role transitions and consumer behavior.

The area of marital satisfaction has been the object of considerable attention from developmental researchers. The research findings relating marital quality (satisfaction and/or adjustment) with the stage of the family career have been rather consistent. The curvilinear pattern encountered by Rollins and Feldman

(1970) has been supported by Burr (1970); Spanier, Lewis, and Cole (1975); and Spanier, Sauer and Larzelere (1979), to mention but a few. However, this ubiquitous curvilinear relationship receives no consideration from Lewis and Spanier (1979) in their propositional review of empirical findings regarding marital quality. In fact, there is no explanation as to why this is so.

The explanation for Lewis and Spanier's omission of the relationship between stage of the family career and marital quality from their propositional inventory may be the increasing dissatisfaction and criticism of scholars with the concept of family career stage. Schram (1979), Nock (1979) and Spanier, Sauer and Larzelere (1979) all indicate dissatisfaction with the concept of 'stages'. It has been suggested by all three that the stage of the family career simply contains a number of more precise variables such as age of spouses, length of marriage, number of children, etc. so that it explains variation in marital quality statistically but not theoretically. Their criticism seems quite similar to the one leveled at research in the area of consumption. That is, that the family career stage represents a composite index and not a theoretical concept.

Undoubtedly this criticism of the family career stage is appropriate but only to the extent that the family career stage is most often used as in index. Agreement ceases when such an index is considered atheoretical. Probably the most frequently used index in the social sciences is socio-economic status. This index is composed of measures on education, occupational prestige and income. It is used as a measure or index for the Weberian notion of social class but is inappropriate for the Marxian concept of social class. When family career stage is used as an index it may be viewed as a composite of years married, age of first child, etc. These measures are for the most part as unidimensional as education and income. And, the family career stage is an index for the concept of a qualitative family experience, as well as, the presence of mutually contingent roles and relationships. So we would agree that the family career

stage is an index but disagree that function is atheoretical.

The selection of a dependent variable should be guided by the concept of family career stage for which the present stage of the life cycle is an index. The concept of family career stage can be brought into better focus by comparing it with the concept of family career. The family career stage represents a qualitative experience for all family members. A stage qua experience has its own internal process with a beginning and an end. For example, the stage where the first child is born into a family represents those unique experiences of moving into mother and father roles and holding high expectations for the first born concurrent with anxiety about role performance. The birth of the second child marks the end of that stage and the beginning of another. Without the birth of the second child there is no rite of passage from the first child stage. The parents would continue to focus on the first born since it is only with the second born that role performance and anxiety can become more diffuse.

In contrast to the family career stage, the family career is composed of stages experienced as they occurred over chronological time. Thus the timing and sequencing (or pattern) of the stages become important. It is crucial for researchers to conceptualize the family career as two-dimensional rather than unidimensional. That is, the family career may be normative or modal in its timing but not sequencing and vice versa. The family career represents a path or vector in a two dimensional space where one dimension is chronological time and the other dimension is composed of the possible stages.

From a comparison of these two concepts, it seems that the family career would be better at explaining developmental, maturational and historical dependent variables and that the present stage of the family career would be better at explaining more temporally limited and immediate dependent variables. The area of marital satisfaction offers a good example. Imagine a research project where the researcher collects data on the individuals family career, present stage

of the family career and present marital satisfaction. Now the researcher must ask the question "Is present marital satisfaction the result of a couples maturation and length of communication, etc., or, rather, is it the result of having two teenagers in the house?" In other words, we want to know if the immediate situation and experience of family and marriage has more predictive power than does the couples history. On apriori grounds we might think that present marital satisfaction is best explained by present stage since we are usually interested in marital satisfaction now and on a day to day basis. But, of course, that day to day satisfaction is constructed by the conjoint biographies and shared experiences of the couple. In fact, on apriori grounds we might suppose that the two constructs so interact as to have a joint effect on marital satisfaction.

Research by White (1981A, 1981B) examines the bivariate relationship between marital satisfaction with the present stage of the family career and the entire family career sequence or path. White reports that the Correlation Ratio (eta) between present stage and marital satisfaction is 0.517 whereas between the family career sequence and marital satisfaction it is 0.401. Both correlations are significant at the 0.001 probability level (N=192). It is interesting that present stage seems to have more efficacy than family career. However, these results are complemented by White's research on perceptual agreement and understanding in marriage. White reports that the Correlation Ratio between agreement and present stage is 0.446. The Correlation Ratio between family career sequence and agreement is 0.597. In this case it would appear that family career sequence explains almost 17% more of the variance in agreement between husbands and wives. The correlation (eta) between present stage and understanding explains about 25% of the variance in understanding whereas between family career and understanding 31% of the variance in the dependent variable is explained.

White's findings suggest that perceptual accuracy and agreement in married couples may be more of a historical process based on the accumulation of certain

experiences. And, on the other hand, it would appear that marital satisfaction is much more related to immediate experiences at one point in time than it is related to the shared experiences accrued over time in the marriage.

It may be impossible on apriori grounds to select a dependent variable that will be best explained by family career or present stage of the family career. Both constructs tap different dimensions of family and marital experience, and yet, they certainly are intimately related. It is the different dimensions that they tap which will guide researchers to suspect one or the other to be more explanatory of a specific dependent variable. At present, we would hope that researchers would use both constructs until more data is collected especially in regard to the rather neglected concept of the family career. As well, insights in this regard may be gained from theoretical and methodological discussions into the nature of the different dimensions tapped by the family career and present career stage. Basically, these dimensions could be called the historical (processual) effects versus the immediate effects of the variable.

Historical Effects and Immediate Effects

For the most part, social scientific procedures have de-emphasized historical or processual effects. Partially this may be due to a discounting of history in our race to become considered 'scientific'. It also has meant an embracing of classical experimental design such that when a stimulus is presented to a subject we assume that the effects, if any, are immediate. Though the social sciences have moved away from this assumption the historical effect has been that theory and methods in this area are less developed than in areas that assume immediate effects such as psychology.

The assumption of immediate effects in developmental theory is perhaps best illustrated by the relationship between present stage of the family career and marital satisfaction. Cross-sectional research tends to support the view that each particular stage predicts a different marital satisfaction score. The

danger inherent in this view is that family career sequencing is normatively defined and regulated. The correlation between a particular stage such as the "launching stage" and marital satisfaction may not reflect so much on that stage as it does on the normative way most families (modal) follow the sequence of stages in the family career. And, of course, "launching" as a stage is hardly independent of previous stages such as having a first child. Only with divorce, separation, and spousal death can we begin to talk about independent events and that may simply reflect ignorance. When more data is accumulated on the family career we may find these stages as contingent on particular family career paths as in the launching stage. So, it is with some caution that developmentalists discuss immediate effects at all.

Methodologically it is possible to remove the effects of the family career sequence and timing from a regression equation leaving only present stage of the family career to explain the variance in the dependent variable. However, such strategies are for the present constrained by the fact that we would have to measure stages and family careers at the ordinal level, at least, and preferably at the interval level. This problem will receive more attention later in this paper.

Although immediate effects of the present stage offers the researcher difficulties, this in no way implies that historical effects are free from such problems. One obvious problem is that we might assume an effect to be historical when in fact it is immediate. For this reason it is important to partition out the effects of the present stage when analyzing the effects of family career sequencing and timing. Even after partitioning out immediate effects, the problem remains as to the source of the historical or processual effect. In general we could categorize the possible sources of processual effects as being due to (1.) historical events, (2.) developmental effects, (3.) cohort effects, and (4.) lineage effects.

Historical events may have a general effect that are not cohort specific. For example, the advent of nuclear weapons has had a general effect such that if a dependent variable were relatively superficial only the general effect would show up. Another example would be the 1930's depression. Though we know that there are specific cohort differences, there is as well a general effect. However, for the most part, the impact of historical events is best measured by cohort experiences of those events (Elder, 1974).

Developmental effects can be further decomposed into age graded social norms for individuals and families and individual biological maturation. What we think of as developmental effects seems to be the interaction of age graded norms and roles with physical (biological) maturation. In terms of explaining behavior in a family, some of that behavior will be explained by the interaction of these two variables.

Cohort effects can be further decomposed into social norms which are cohort specific and historical events as they are experienced by the cohort. Each age cohort may develop unique norms for family life that are not shared by other cohorts. For example, it may be that fertility patterns in the post-war baby boom cohort are partially due to the teachers of the 50's and 60's preaching about population explosions, overcrowding, etc. The cohort specific norms may also interact with historical events as experienced by the cohort. Undoubtedly, people of draft age experienced the Vietnam war in a cohort specific way. This experience may interact with specific cohort norms and produce behavior unique to that cohort.

Lineage effects, as suggested by Hagestad and Dixon (1980), may be yet another source of processual effects. Lineage effects can be decomposed into lineage specific norms and lineage events. A lineage specific norm in a family would be transmitted as "Rothschilds don't behave that way!". The family name and trust are invoked as the authority behind the norms. Lineage events could be

such things as inheritance, the birth of the first male descendent to carry on the family name or the conviction of the family head as a criminal. Lineage norms may interact with lineage events as with the norm of inheritance such as primogeniture.

In general, then, historical and immediate effects are somewhat confounded. It seems a premature assumption to propose that one or the other is more efficacious in explaining family behavior. The complexity of a processual or historical explanation implies that scholars should be cautious in attributing causation to one source of processual effects alone. At present it would seem that we are just beginning to refine indices and measurements so that these sources of variance can be isolated and their effects examined.

The Problem of Scaling the Family Career

It seems obvious that the sophistication of theoretical assertions in a science are directly linked to the use of sophisticated mathematical analysis. The corollary to this is that progress in a science is inextricably linked to the levels of measurement of its variables. Perhaps more than for any other reason, the level of measurement in researching family development variables has delayed the progress and fruition of this theoretical approach.

Family career stages have typically been measured as categorical or nominal level variables. Although researchers have used the Correlation Ratio (eta) and the more recent log-linear techniques in the analysis of family career stages, these techniques are nonetheless approximations of certain aspects in the full arsenal of interval scale statistical techniques and mathematical models. As mentioned previously, it would be desirable to partition out effects from various sources such as age cohort and lineage, however, such a procedure is most often accomplished using regression analysis. Even if an ordinal scale were achieved we could violate some assumptions as a trade off for more statistically powerful techniques of analysis. However, the family career stage and the family career are at the categorical level thus excluding these options.

The problem we confront in this section of the paper is, then, to propose some initial steps in scaling the family career. Though attention in this section is focused exclusively on scaling the family career, the implications for scaling within each career stage should be fairly clear.

A scale is any measurement device constructed so that there are points and systematic relations between points. The systematic relations between points are at minimum the ordinal relations of "greater than" and "less than". If the relations between points are so defined as to allow equal intervals so that we may assess how many units "greater than" or "less than", then the scale is interval. (See R. McGinnis, 1965). But it is essential that the scale represents an underlying dimension which it measures. So, for example, a ruler represents a scale which measures length, the underlying dimension. Although there are techniques for multidimensional scaling, the family career is at such an embryonic stage that we must first attain an ordinal level of measurement.

As previously noted, the family career is conceptualized as two dimensional. One dimension is the timing of the family career stages and the other dimension is the sequence of family career stages. We might think of the family career as a vector or path which moves through this two dimensional space, accelerating and decelerating its trajectory between stages. It may well be that once we solve the measurement problems for each dimension, timing and sequence, that we will find a multidimensional scale which is monotonic and composed of these two dimensions. However, for the present purpose, we examine timing and sequence separately.

There are some good reasons for examining timing and sequence separately. It may well be that timing is not normatively dictated but is rather a response to general historical events and cohort specific events. On the other hand,

sequence may well be relatively unresponsive to such events but very normatively regulated. White (1981c) in his analysis of age cohort effects on timing and sequencing of the family career, reports no significant effects on sequencing but moderate and significant effects on timing. The resulting picture is that timing as a dimension may represent historical effects of events whereas sequencing of stages may represent normative definitions. An example of this would be families delaying children because of a war but afterward proceeding through the normative stages even though the timing is off.

Table I below illustrates the timing and sequencing of family career stages for a random sample of 277 drawn from a small midwestern farm service community. The data was collected by means of a retrospective cross sectional survey.[1] Note that Table I seems to indicate much greater variation for the years between stages than the actual sequence of stages. Of course, a comparison is complicated by the fact that timing is measured by years which is interval (ratio) whereas the sequence is measured by modal category at each time point. This gives yet another

(Table I about here)

reason for treating the two dimensions as independent scaling problems. After all, timing can be adequately measured now but it is the sequencing of family career stages that offers the greatest difficulty in measurement.

The first step in any attempt to scale the family career sequence is to identify the underlying dimension of the construct 'family career'. The family

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[1] As Schram (1979) points out, "We cannot extrapolate to an entire population from data reported by one cohort. Any developmental perspective that is based on the experiences of one cohort is inherently problematic." (1979:9) Although retrospective cross-sectional surveys solve somewhat the problem of sampling only one cohort, we are still left with the problem that the most complete family career information will always come from the oldest cohort. So although we may be able to assess cohort effects with retrospective methods we nonetheless cannot disentangle the family career and aging effects.

career is constructed by the particular sequence of stages experienced by any family. The stages are viewed theoretically as composed of particular constellations of contingent and complementary roles. As the roles change in normative content by either the addition of new roles or by the age-graded normative content of the roles, we say that such transitions mark the transition process to a new qualitative stage. Thus, in general, the theoretical view of transitions by a family to various stages is that it is a normatively regulated process. It is the 'normativeness' that seems to be the underlying dimension to the family career.

To say that the underlying dimension to the family career is its normative character is basically to assert that there are specific sequencing patterns that are considered to be 'normal' family life patterns and other sequencing patterns that are deviations from the norms. Most researchers have indicated the normative sequencing of the family career by reporting the modal stage for each time point. Deviations from each modal stage could then represent those families not following the dominant career pattern. (See Table I).

Several assumptions must be made in order to scale the family career. First, we must assume that qualitative stages can be identified as categories such as marriage, birth of first child, death of spouse, etc. A second assumption is that respondents can report the order in which these stages occurred in their experience. Thirdly, we assume that the ordering of stages represents qualitative social process time rather than chronological time. The area of chronological time is dealt with by the measurement of <u>timing</u> whereas qualitative time (social process) is dealt with by the <u>sequencing</u> of stages or family events. And the last, and perhaps most precarious assumption, is that for any population of families the report of the most frequently occurring sequences of family stages, in fact, accurately reflects the normative rules governing family composition

and development for those families. This last assumption that behavior and norms are closely associated can be subjected to empirical test after scaling the family career. For example, individuals could be given a number of examples of various family careers and asked to rank order them in terms of how deviant they are from the pattern 'normal' families represent. This rank ordering could then be compared with descriptive data from the same population on how they actually sequence their family careers.

The steps in constructing a family career scale (FC scale) for any population of families requires finding the modal category for each time point. So for the first time point the most frequently occurring category is usually marriage. That category is then assigned a numeral and all other categories are assigned rank numerals based on their frequency of occurrence in the sample data (or for the specific time point). This procedure is followed for each time point in the data set. The number of time points in the analysis is largely dictated by the number of stages listed by respondents. For example, in the author's data set which is used for illustrative purposes in this paper, it was found that after about six time points the number of respondents was so small that analysis of time points beyond that sixth point was not statistically warranted. However, this is not to say that these 'outlier' may not yield further insights at a qualitative level.

The next step in scaling the family career is to construct a set of deviations from the modal family career. An algorithm which subtracts the numeral for each modal stage at each time point from all reported numerals for that time point serves this purpose. These deviations can then be summed so that each respondent's family career is assigned a deviation score. If a family followed all the modal categories at each time point their score on the FC scale would be zero. The

maximum score would be the sum of all maximum deviations from each modal category for each time point.

A somewhat more complicated procedure can be used to introduce the notion of social process time into the computation of the FC scale. In this regard, higher numerals can be assigned to modal categories as time points increase. A deviation, now, can be encoded as a delay in being at the modal stage on time. So, for example, if we are coding the third time point and the modal category is the birth of a second child and an individual is getting remarried at that time point, this could be encoded as a delay or being out of step with the normatively defined process. In this case, the individual may be assigned a negative numeral and the FC scale will have both positive and negative values with a mean of zero.

Now, we can move to an example of this scaling procedure using a real data set for illustration. Twelve stages were given to respondents to order according to their family life experience. The stages were as follows:

1. marriage
2. 1st child
3. 2nd child
4. other children
5. death of spouse
6. divorce
7. adoption of a child
8. remarriage
9. children left home
10. separation from spouse
11. relatives moved in
12. death of a child

Although this is certainly not a complete list of possible stages, many of these are stages commonly used in the family literature.

In creating the FC scale for this data set, numerals were assigned based on the total frequency of the category. So, for example, marriage was the single most frequently occurring category throughout all time points and, hence, it was assigned a numeral of one. It is interesting to compare this method of encoding with that of each time point's modal category since the two techniques yield virtually the same results for the present data set. The numerals for each

modal stage for each time point were then subtracted from all scores for each time point. So, at time 1., the numeral one was subtracted from all scores. This procedure was performed for all time points and the values were summed. The resulting FC scale represents deviations from the normative family career.

Table II is a frequency distribution of the FC scale. In this distribution singles were not excluded and, hence, the number of singles (N=68) show up as a negative deviation of minus ten on the scale. Furthermore, the FC scale in Table II is for only the first four time points, otherwise sample attrition becomes a problem since fewer and fewer persons had completed launching, the empty nest, etc. This is a methodological problem in its own right and deserves further discussion though it is beyond the scope of the present project.

(Table II about here)

It should be noted from Table II that in constructing the scale singles were not included in the frequencies to establish modal categories. If they had been included, then, clearly they would represent a modal category but this would be misconceived as the family career.

In Table II, the four time points' modal categories were marriage, first child, second child, and other children, respectively. In this particular coding singles were coded as zero and, hence, were the maximum negative score. As well, families which had only completed some stages out of the four were assigned zero scores for the missing stages and these families show up as negative deviations. This was done so that the sample size could be maintained. The positive deviations represent the real deviations from the family career as ordered by higher numerals above four and by their frequency of occurrence. Thus, 'children leaving home' is coded as five, 'separation' as six, 'divorce' as seven, 'remarriage' as eight, 'death of a spouse' as nine, 'adoption' as ten, 'relatives moved in' as eleven,

and 'death of a child' as twelve. It is suggested, however, that with larger samples age cohort specific family careers could be created to surmount the problems created by treating incomplete family careers as deviations on the FC scale.

This problem is more clearly revealed in the significant (.05) correlation between age and the FC scale ($r = 0.43$). However, the number of years married fails to predict scores on the scale ($r = 0.08$). One of the most interesting relationships is between the total number of years spent in four stages and the FC scale. Table III is a scattergram of this bivariate relationship.

(Table III about here)

Table III shows a clearly curvilinear relationship. The positive deviations from the modal career spend less time between career stages than those families following the normative family career. The negative values represent families and singles yet to complete their careers to the fourth time point. The positive deviations represent, at least partially, the fact that divorce and separation tend to occur most frequently in the first ten years of marriage. But, the relationship between the FC scale and total time spent in the career seems as well to indicate that the most normatively successful families spend the longest amount of time in each stage. This could further suggest that the timing of the family career stages interacts with the sequencing of stages, for if the timing is too rapid it may spell an early demise or interruption to the family career sequence. Certainly, this area of interaction between timing variables and sequencing variables such as the FC scale deserves more research and investigation.

The work presented here on scaling the family career is at an embryonic state as yet. The problems of sample attrition, age cohort specific family careers, and total sample size are not, however, insurmountable obstacles. The present work must be viewed as suggestive rather than definitive. And, it is

hoped that other researchers will join in the development of an adequate family career methodology. Certainly, further refinement is necessary in the area of scaling the family career sequence of stages. Only with such a scale can we treat the family career as an explanatory variable in more complex multivariate analyses of family dependent variables.

Conclusion

Three methodological issues have been discussed in this paper. The issue of which dependent variables should be explained by the family career rather than the present stage of the career was found to be unresolvable at the present time. Partially this is due to the paucity of empirical research on the family career in relation to the same dependent variables such as marital satisfaction which have been so frequently related to the present stage of the family. But, as well, it would seem that a more substantial problem underlies the selection of dependent variables and, that is, the second issue discussed in this paper; the issue of immediate and historical effects. In this regard, it appeared that many researchers assume effects to be the result of the immediately previous stimuli. However, these effects might well be the result of historical effects or an interaction effect between historical and immediate causes.

The third issue confronted in this paper is the issue of scaling the family career. More precisely, the issue is scaling the sequencing of the family career stages since the timing dimension of the family career is at an adequate level of measurement already. The sequencing of the family career was treated as a normatively regulated process such that deviations from the modal procession of stages implies deviation from the norms. The FC scale was developed as a measure of deviations from the normative family career. Although the FC scale needs further

refinement, it is hoped that other researchers will join in the development of an adequate family career scale.

The three methodological issues discussed in this paper do not represent all or even most of the major problems in developmental methodology. However, other major areas such as sampling techniques and research design have received much more scholarly attention. It has been the purpose of this paper to raise these three relatively unaddressed issues, not so much to resolve them as to invite other researchers to share their solutions and insight by offering my own vexations and partial solutions as a stimulus for further discussion.

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TABLE I

THE FAMILY CAREER PATTERN OF STAGES AND THE

AVERAGE YEARS BETWEEN STAGES OF THE FAMILY CAREER

Time 1	$\bar{X}$ = 5.4	Time 2	$\bar{X}$ = 4.25	Time 3	$\bar{X}$ = 5.9	Time 4	$\bar{X}$ = 9.4	Time 5	$\bar{X}$ = 10.0	Time 6
Mode=1.0	Sd= 8.4	Mode=2.0	Sd= 5.9	Mode=3.0	Sd= 6.4	Mode=4.0	Sd= 8.2	Mode=9.0	Sd= 11.7	Mode=9.0
$\bar{x}$= 1.048		$\bar{x}$= 2.43		$\bar{x}$= 3.63		$\bar{x}$= 5.86		$\bar{x}$=7.26		$\bar{x}$= 7.33
Sd= 0.37		Sd= 1.77		Sd= 1.82		Sd=2.48		Sd=2.25		Sd= 2.47
N= 209		N= 179		N= 151		N=91		N=46		N= 21

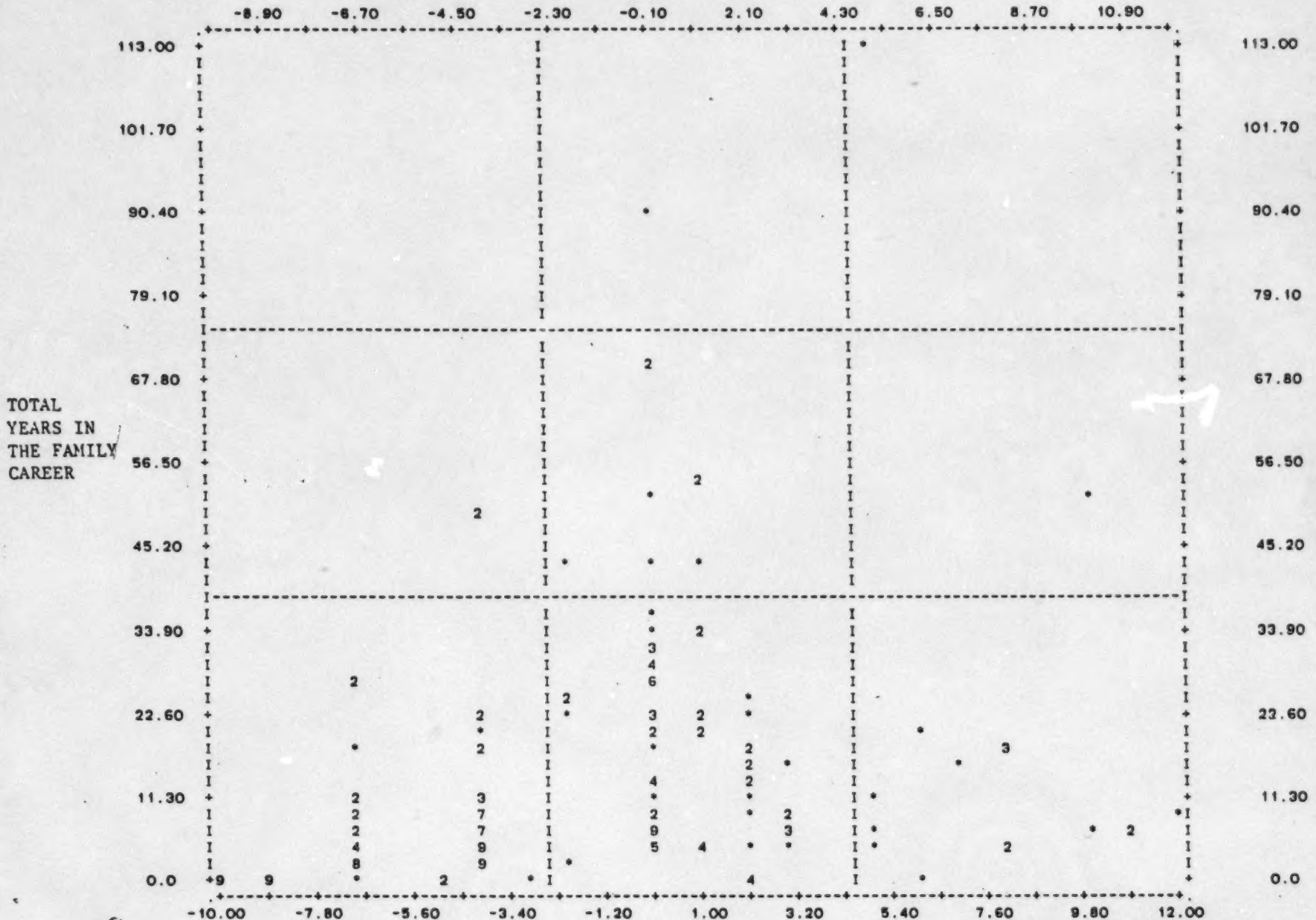
TABLE II

THE FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION
FOR ONE FORM OF FAMILY CAREER SCALE

FC SCALE	ABSOLUTE FREQ	RELATIVE FREQ (PCT)	ADJUSTED FREQ (PCT)	CUM FREQ (PCT)
-10.	68	24.5	24.5	24.5
-9.	29	10.5	10.5	35.0
-7.	22	7.9	7.9	43.0
-5.	2	0.7	0.7	43.7
-4.	47	17.0	17.0	60.6
-3.	1	0.4	0.4	61.0
-2.	5	1.8	1.8	62.8
0.	51	18.4	18.4	81.2
1.	13	4.7	4.7	85.9
2.	15	5.4	5.4	91.3
3.	7	2.5	2.5	93.9
5.	4	1.4	1.4	95.3
6.	2	0.7	0.7	96.0
7.	1	0.4	0.4	96.4
8.	5	1.8	1.8	98.2
10.	2	0.7	0.7	98.9
11.	2	0.7	0.7	99.6
12.	1	0.4	0.4	100.0
TOTAL	277	100.0	100.0	

TABLE III

SCATTERGRAM OF TOTAL YEARS IN THE FAMILY CAREER WITH THE FC SCALE



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